

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**DCS Commissioner Calls for Internal Investigation
Concerns Emerge Concerning Child Abuse Report**

Campbell Co., TN- Department of Children's Services Commissioner Viola P. Miller today initiated an internal affairs investigation into the actions of the Campbell County DCS office following a report made to the local office alleging the abuse of 3 year-old Haley Spicer.

"If attempts were made to notify DCS about the safety of this child, and we failed to respond in an appropriate and timely manner, this behavior is completely and totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated by this administration," said Commissioner Miller. Miller also said that disciplinary action may be forthcoming in this case.

According to reports, several phone calls were made to DCS on June 16, 2004 to notify child protective services about the abuse of Haley Spicer but the information was not immediately passed along to the investigator. Several hours after these attempts, an investigator was contacted, responded to the abuse report, and Haley Spicer was taken into protective custody along with 3 of her siblings.

Haley is presently hospitalized with what appears to be chemical burns to her eyes, legs, arms, and buttocks and has marks and bruises on various locations over her body. DCS investigators are awaiting the final medical evaluation to determine the exact type of injuries Haley has sustained and to determine the medical care she will need going forward. The other siblings, which include two females, ages 9 and 12, and a male age 9, were seen by medical professionals and appear to be in good health. They have been placed together in a DCS foster home.

The DCS Internal Affairs Division is conducting an in-depth investigation into the delay in the response to the June 16, 2004 child abuse report. Additionally, a thorough case file review will be conducted into two prior complaints alleging abuse of Haley Spicer.

In August 2003, an allegation of physical abuse of Haley Spicer was investigated by DCS child protective services and was determined to be unfounded. In April 2004, another report was received by DCS but was not assigned for an investigation.

As a result of this situation, DCS is expediting the implementation of a statewide 24-hour a day system to report child abuse.

"Our agency has been entrusted to protect children. They are our most vulnerable citizens and this agency must be responsive when a member of the community reports concerns about a child's safety," Commissioner Miller said.

To report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, please call Central Intake at 1-877-237-0004.

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